

VZCZCXYZ0000  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSG #0839/01 2592049  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 152049Z SEP 08  
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3711  
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 3524  
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 2090  
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 1036  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0415  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1773  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 5673  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4032  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 1903  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SANTIAGO 000839

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/BSC, WHA/EPSC, EEB/IFD, INR/IAA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [CI](#)

SUBJECT: CONCERTED EFFORT TO CURB VIOLENCE ON 1973 COUP ANNIVERSARY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The 35th anniversary of the September 11 military coup was marked with violence, but less than in previous years. Interior Minister Perez Yoma told the Ambassador that the police, using intelligence and preventive measures, had done a good job minimizing protests, particularly in traditionally violent-prone areas. Unlike in 2007, there were no deaths and fewer arrests. President Bachelet commemorated the death of President Salvador Allende in a ceremony at La Moneda with his two daughters by opening two recently-restored rooms where he died in 1973. A day earlier, Isabel Allende dismissed a new theory that contended a second weapon may have been used in the death of the ousted president. END SUMMARY.

GOC Readout: Better Than Last Year  
-----

¶2. (SBU) Interior Minister Perez Yoma told the Ambassador on September 12 that the security forces had done well to keep violence to a minimum on the September 11 coup anniversary. There were no deaths, fewer arrests, and less violence. He credited increased police intelligence and preventive measures, noting the police had successfully prevented subversive activity in traditionally-violent districts. For example, Villa Francia, which has been a hub for violent activity during the past 30 years, was tranquil for the first time on September 11.

¶3. (SBU) Perez Yoma said violence did spread to some new areas, concentrated largely in other southern, poorer sectors of Santiago. The police have detected links between the hostile perpetrators and drug traffickers, who may be attempting to establish fiefdoms through armed activities. The Ambassador asked about the weaponry used by the assailants, given that two Carabineros had received gunshot wounds. Perez Yoma said most of the trouble makers were young kids with home-made shotguns.

¶4. (SBU) The Interior Minister added that the coup anniversary date has become an unexplainable -- once per year -- festivity of violence. Small cells of individuals instigate the violence, loot local stores, and cause senseless damage in usually peaceful communities. More than 20 Carabineros were injured during the violent protests and one youth is in serious condition.

¶5. (U) The police seized an estimated 3,000 weapons prior to September 11, and detained more than 800 individuals leading up to the anniversary date. Interior Vice Minister Harboe ran an operation center to monitor and react to developments in Santiago and throughout the country. The Vice Minister told the media there were children as young as 10 and 12 years old taking part in the

protests, and he lamented parents would allow them to participate in such destructive and dangerous activities.

#### Restoration of Salon Blanco

-----

¶6. (U) In a ceremony at La Moneda on September 11, President Bachelet commemorated the 35th anniversary of Allende's death by opening two newly-restored rooms where he spent his last moments before taking his life in 1973. Bachelet toured the Salon Blanco with Allende's daughters, Isabel and Maria Paz. The room featured the leader's original desk, a portrait, tapestry and a rotary phone from the period.

#### Isabel Allende Confirms Cause of Father's Death

-----

¶7. (U) The death of Salvador Allende in 1973 has been part of the mythology associated with the military coup, notably outside of Chile. It is commonly accepted in Chile that President Allende committed suicide (using a weapon given to him as a gift by Fidel Castro) rather than surrender in 1973. A forensic expert recently raised doubts about the suicide, claiming that a newly-available autopsy report suggests there is evidence of wounds from a second weapon.

¶8. (U) Isabel Allende on September 10 quickly refuted the theory, stating that no military were present on the second floor of La Moneda when her father died in 1973. Moreover, she noted she believes the version of her fathers' advisors who were with him until the end. She admitted that in 1973, and for several years after, she had her doubts about the cause of her father's death, but today she and her family consider the issue closed.

#### A Day that Divides

-----

¶9. (SBU) Comment: Thirty-five years since the 1973 coup, Chilean youths continue to instigate violence and destroy property on this controversial and disruptive anniversary. Workers depart early and stores and businesses close to avoid the demonstrations. The derelict activities appear less driven by ideology than by a desire to participate in dangerous, anti-establishment behavior. While the September 11 news has largely become a police story, several political commentators contend that until Chilean society dialogues about the significance of that day, little will change on future September 11 anniversaries.

SIMONS